

Reflections on April 2010 Internship Field-based Activities

As a practicing Director of Technology in La Vernia ISD, my Internship activities are naturally somewhat different from those of the typical student. After discussing the best course of action with Dr. Abernathy, we agreed that under the guidance of my Mentor, LVISD Superintendent Dr. Tom Harvey, I would pick tasks that I perform as a part of my duties, but examine them with a critical eye towards which ISTE Technology Facilitator (TF) Standards and Performance Indicator they address. Additionally, two separate, special technology tasks are designated as Internship Projects.

My major task during April was preparing a multimedia presentation on Digital Native Learning Styles to proffer during the Education Service Center, Region 20's Tech Fiesta, a regional TCEA-affiliated technology conference presented during Fiesta Week in San Antonio, Texas. All of my learning from my degree program, and especially from my EDLD 5306 Concepts of Educational Technology class, went into this presentation. This presentation helped me meet multiple ISTE Technology Facilitator Standards, especially Standards TF-I, TF-II and TF-VI.

Williamson and Redish (2009) point out that "When implementing TF/TL Standard II: Planning and Designing Learning Environments and Experiences, technology facilitators and leaders help teachers understand and implement Student-Centered Learning, an important and essential condition for achieving ISTE's NETS-S. In helping teachers shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning, technology facilitators and leaders assume the role of professional learning coaches..." (p. 45).

My biggest challenge regarding ISTE Standard TF-I was that I had to learn to see the world through the eyes of my teachers, digital immigrants who are full of trepidation and fear

both of the technology itself and the possibility of making mistakes and embarrassing themselves. As Prensky (2005) reminds us, digital immigrant teachers "...have adopted many aspects of the technology, but just like those who learn another language later in life [they] retain an 'accent' because [they] still have one foot in the past" (p. 8). Despite my age, my disposition and thought processes are more similar to those of the digital natives, so becoming a more effective technology facilitator requires me to find better methods to reach and teach my digital immigrant teachers.

Under Standard TF-II, Planning and Designing Learning Environments and Experiences, the task of developing and presenting this session at Region 20 offered hands-on practice in planning, designing, and modeling effective learning environments and multiple learning experiences supported by technology.

Standard TF-VI deals with the social, ethical, legal, and human issues of instructional technology. As a technology facilitator, I endeavored to understand the social, ethical, legal, and human issues surrounding the use of technology in schools, and to utilize my presentation to assist the teachers and administrators in my audience in applying that understanding to their practice, particularly in regards to embedding ethics into the instruction of our cyber citizens.

My other big task in April dealt with updating and upgrading our servers and network infrastructure. While undertaking the task of updating and upgrading all the District servers and infrastructure, I focused on the vital role this infrastructure plays in supporting collaborative learning. As Pitler, Hubbell, Kuhn and Malenoski (2007) explain, "Technology can play a unique and vital role in cooperative learning by facilitating group collaboration, providing structure for group tasks, and allowing members of the group to communicate even if they are

not working face to face” (p. 140). Reliable infrastructure and ready access to high-bandwidth Internet connectivity are essential enablers to modern instructional methodologies.

Upgrading and updating the servers and infrastructure helped me meet standard on Performance Indicators VII.A, using technology facilities and resources to implement classroom instruction, and VII.B, following applicable procedures and guidelines when planning and purchasing technology resources.

While reflecting on the month’s activities, I gained a deeper awareness of the fear that teachers and administrators have in allowing our digital native students to utilize technology in ways that are unnatural to them as digital immigrants. Many audience members expressed concern that students would misuse iPods, smart phones and digital cameras, causing problems for them and embarrassment for their campus. This connects to my past learning regarding resistance to change, and the stages that people go through in accepting change, so I tried to keep my comments and examples constructive and reassuring while addressing their concerns as discipline issues that can be handled using existing discipline and behavior support techniques.

My future learning has been impacted by my drive to evangelize our need to transform learning in order to better support the needs and non-traditional learning styles of our digital native students, so I will continue to seek new information and best practices for transforming instruction to make learning more engaging.

Viewing my performance on these tasks from an educator’s point of view, I learned that I enjoy presenting the concept of digital native learning styles to educators; seeing the light come on as they realize why their students are different, and why they are not engaged, is a great reward for all the hard work I put into my presentation. With my hectic duty schedule, this presentation might not have happened without the extra push afforded by my need for innovative

Internship activities and learning experiences, and I will now endeavor to apply the learning from my degree program and make presentations such as this one an annual event.

My performance during these tasks was impacted by my learning throughout my degree program; I have been invigorated by my ability to address learning needs and intervene on behalf of our students. Based on these activities, I will take the knowledge I gained of educator's primary concerns with and objections over the use of digital native tools in the classroom to future contexts, making me better prepared to lead a dialog regarding the role of tools such as smart phones, iPods and video games in the classroom.

As a learner, I gained even more knowledge regarding digital native learning styles while preparing my presentation; the research I performed helped me gain insight into the unique needs and learning styles of our modern students.

I was effective as a learner as I adapted a new viewpoint while upgrading and updating our servers and infrastructure; I analyzed and responded to educational needs as well as I responded to technology needs. I will transfer my learning to new situations requiring me to evaluate hardware, software and services that will support or impact instruction.

As a lifelong learner, I must perform further research regarding the role of technology infrastructure in supporting and enabling student-centered learning so that I can determine best practices for evaluating new products and services with an eye to their potential support for the requisite collaboration and interaction that student-centered learning involves.

References:

Williamson, J. & Redish, T. (2009). *Technology Facilitation and Leadership Standards: What Every K-12 Leader Should Know and Be Able To Do*. Eugene, OR: International Society for Technology in Education.

Prensky, M. (2005). Listen to the Natives. *Educational Leadership*, 63(4).

Pitler, H., Hubbell, E., Kuhn, M. & Malenoski, K. (2007). *Using Technology with Classroom Instruction that Works*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.